

## the language of flowers

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/29466258) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/29466258>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Category:	<a href="#">M/M</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Minecraft (Video Game)</a> , <a href="#">Video Blogging RPF</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Clay   Dream/GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF)</a>
Character:	<a href="#">Clay   Dream (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Alexis   Quackity</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Alternate Universe - Modern with Magic</a> , <a href="#">Alternate Universe - Flower Shop</a> , <a href="#">First Kiss</a> , <a href="#">Light Angst</a> , <a href="#">Happy Ending</a>
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2021-02-15 Words: 11559

## the language of flowers

by [orphan\\_account](#)

### Summary

“You know, when I came across a random flower shop and decided to buy something for a girl I liked, I didn’t expect some short British guy to start giving me orders,” Dream calls over his shoulder.

George scoffs. “I’m not that short,” he mutters. “And what’s wrong with being British?”

“Aside from the obvious?”

### Notes

happy valentine's day, everyone!! to celebrate, i ran a fic write event with some incredibly talented mcytblr authors - you can (and should) check out all their works in the collection :]

grav, this is for you – you're one of my absolute favourite writers ever (if you guys haven't read "the still point" yet then you're seriously missing out). you are such a lovely person who always brightens up my dash and i'm sending you all the love in the world. also, your writing is breathtakingly gorgeous.

i chose to work with both the magical universe au and the flower shop au, and the trope i was given was "first kiss" <3 enjoy the fic!!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

When the chimes at the entrance to his shop tinkle lightly, alerting him to a visitor, George is midway through adjusting the pH levels of the soil of a rather temperamental azalea shrub. He groans, letting the magic seep out of his fingers and curl uselessly around the terracotta pot. The magic, condensed into a shimmering mist, hovers above the thick oak wood of his working bench, and George flicks it casually toward one of the light charms floating from the ceiling. It turns from amber to a bright, glowing pink and George snorts, shaking his head at the colour.

The chimes tinkle again, slightly more insistently this time.

“Fuck. I’ll be back for you later,” he tells the plant in front of him, running a hand through his hair distractedly. The azalea twitches slightly, and George swears the fuchsia blooms are giggling at him. “Brat,” he mutters.

“You know, talking to plants is the first sign of madness, actually,” a familiar voice says behind him. George spins around, pulling the pink charm down with a jerk of his wrist and tossing it smoothly towards his visitor.

Quackity squeaks in surprise. “What the hell, George,” he complains as the magic absorbs into his chest with a slight tremor. “A sticking colour charm, really? This only backfires on you.”

George crosses his arms stubbornly. “I dare you,” he says with as much sternness as he can muster.

Quackity grins wickedly, and with a snap of his fingers, a magenta duck pops out of nowhere, waddling across George’s workbench. It’s tiny, as they always are, able to fit perfectly in the palm of George’s hand. Miniature ducks – George has seen enough of them to last a lifetime. They’re Quackity’s speciality; at the Academy, when he’d found out his magic was animal-inclined, he’d summoned about a hundred of them out of pure glee. George had been pulling feathers out of his hair for weeks, but at least his nickname for Alex had stuck. Even their teachers had begun calling him Quackity during their final years.

“I’m just going to vanish him, idiot,” George says, scooping the absurdly bright pink duck up from where it had determinedly been making its way towards the problematic azalea. It squawks in protest, pecking at George’s fingers. “Stop biting me! That’s very rude,” he scolds.

“And... talking to animals. The second sign of madness,” Quackity says solemnly. “My best friend is officially going crazy.”

“Talking to animals is literally your whole thing. Also, don’t let Luna hear you say that,” George warns him. With eerily perfect timing, his familiar stalks out of the storeroom, making a beeline to her food bowl.

“*Quackity is here,*” Luna observes loftily. “*Has he brought me another snack?*”

George hides the recently-created duck behind his back nonchalantly. “No, he hasn’t. He’s just being a pain in the ass.” Luna looks up at him, blinking slowly with irises that match George’s own – one deep orange, one clear blue.

“Dude, I cannot explain how extremely fucked up it is that you’re dissing me to your cat when I’m standing right here,” Quackity interjects loudly.

“*He’s right, my moon. Get some manners,*” Luna teases smugly, the purr of her voice resonating in

George's head.

George scoffs loudly. "See if I give you any treats later," he threatens. Luna cocks her head indifferently, then leaps onto the shop's counter and rubs her head against the cash register.

"Are you done arguing with your familiar, or should I just stand here for the rest of my life?" Quackity has his arms crossed when George turns back to him, tapping his foot impatiently.

"Sorry, sorry," George says. "Want to head to the back? I've got some tea brewing."

"Of course you do," Quackity grumbles (he's more of a coffee person), but he nods his head anyway. George leads the way to the back of the shop, through overhanging ferns and trailing vines of ivy. He casts a few more charms as he goes; sending soft balls of light floating gently into the air that illuminate the greenery around them. The charms are glamoured, obviously – if a mortal walked in, they'd see nothing more than small antique lamps dangling from the ceiling.

George nudges the door open with the tip of his boot, Quackity following behind him. Inside, his office is in the same state of disarray it was when he left it this morning; his desk covered with scattered order forms for the latest juniper berry and mugwort seeds shipments, scribbled post-it notes of ingredients and clientele request sheets. It's a problem for another time, he thinks grimly to himself.

"There you go, little guy," he murmurs, setting Quackity's duck down on a file containing documents George knows are important but hasn't gotten around to reading yet. The duck squawks, then ruffles its feathers and curls into a tiny ball of magenta fluff.

"Dude, you've got to clean up in here!" Quackity protests. "Your desk is barely even visible under all this stupid paper."

George waves him away off-handedly. "It's fine, I'll sort it out later," he lies, heading over to his selection of tea leaves. "Jasmine or lily?"

"Black coffee."

"You know I don't drink that filth, Quackity," George reprimands him lightly. "Come on, they're both delicious. The jasmine is a homemade blend – I made it myself!"

"I know what homemade means, George," Quackity mocks lightly.

"Fine, be that way. No tea for you then," George sniffs, pulling out his favourite mug. Quackity had bought it for him two years ago, entirely as a joke, from a mortal party shop during the month of "Halloween." He coaxes the water in his rickety kettle to a boil with a quick gesture, not bothered to wait for it to heat up the normal way, and pours it into the black cauldron mug that reads "*WITCHES' BREW*" across its front.

"Why are you here, by the way?" he asks as he spoons some of the jasmine leaves into the water.

Quackity drums his fingers against the desk absent-mindedly. "What, a friend can't just drop in to say hi?"

George flashes him an unimpressed glance. "I don't buy that for a second."

Quackity laughs. "Alright, alright, you got me. I was just wondering if you had any spare marigolds? I need a bunch for this stupid project I'm working on."

George mentally checks over his inventory. “Yeah, I can give you about thirty, if that works.”

“Perfect. You’re the best, Georgie,” Quackity coos.

“Fuck off,” George says. “Where would you be without me?”

“You’re so full of yourself,” Quackity teases as George strains the leaves out of his mug, leaving behind a perfectly brewed cup of tea. He takes a slow sip, savouring the comforting warmth.

“I actually also came in to check up on you, though,” Quackity says more seriously, and George glances at him.

“Check up on me? What are you talking about,” George half-laughs, leaning against his counter to face Quackity.

Quackity’s expression becomes a strange mixture of stern and fond – George is used to it, used to his friend sending him constant messages and weird things in the mail and an absurd amount of tiny ducks, but the concern was unnecessary. George is fine, and the shop had never done better in terms of business.

“George, I’m saying this because I’m your friend, and I love you – but I think you’re getting a little lonely, man,” Quackity says, meeting George’s gaze.

George sputters, clutching his mug a little tighter. “Lonely? Me? I’m not lonely,” he says defensively.

Quackity raises an eyebrow. “George, I want you to name one friend that you talk to on a regular basis.”

George scoffs. He’s looking at him.

“Aside from me,” Quackity continues knowingly. George deflates ever so slightly. He takes another sip of his tea in a transparent attempt to stall.

“Well?” Quackity says challengingly.

George frowns, screwing up his nose as he thinks. It’s not like he doesn’t have friends – he’s just generally more introverted, which isn’t that big of a deal, honestly. He’s happy where he is.

“I have Luna,” he offers.

Quackity laughs disbelievingly. “George, I know you didn’t just give me the name of your familiar as your friend. You have to see how pathetic that looks,” he says, not unkindly.

George winces, but he knows Quackity is right. Besides Quackity, George doesn’t have much of a social circle. Correction: he doesn’t have much of a social circle, period.

“Okay, so my only friend is you,” George says flatly, ignoring the slight pang that goes through his chest at his reluctant admission of the truth. “What do you want me to do about that?”

Quackity takes a few steps forward, placing both his hands on George’s shoulders. He’s shorter than George, only by a few inches or so, but that doesn’t stop him from being an intimidating presence by any means.

He presses his lips into a flat line, jet black eyes meeting George’s. “I want you to put yourself out there, George. I know it’s scary, or whatever, but if you don’t start leaving this shop once in a

while you're going to turn into one of the goddamn flowers."

"Yeah, and how exactly do I put myself out there? Do you want me to just start making small talk with every customer I meet from now on?" George says sarcastically.

Quackity shakes George lightly. "Yes! That's exactly what I want you to do, idiot. Mortal, witch, who cares – just start chatting to them. It'll probably improve your sales, too."

George exhales heavily, shaking his head. "Fine," he mutters reluctantly. "I'll do it."

Quackity appraises him with a scrutinising once-over. "Prove it," he challenges.

"Prove it, how?"

Quackity bites his lip, clearly mulling it over. His eyes light up, and George groans internally. That look has never brought him anything but trouble.

"I've got it. The very next customer who steps foot in this store – you become friends with them."

George makes a very undignified snorting noise. "The next customer - Quackity, have you gone insane? I can't just - it's not that easy, you know."

"Yeah, well, what's the harm in trying?" Quackity says, with an air of casual smugness.

George thinks about turning all his marigolds a bright shade of cyan just to fuck with him.

"Ugh. Okay. But when I spectacularly embarrass myself in front of the nice old lady who's probably going to walk in soon, I'm blaming you," George warns him.

Quackity grins. "And I'm perfectly okay with that," he announces.

George gulps down the rest of his tea and slams his mug down on the counter. "Let me go get your marigolds so you can get out of here and stop annoying me," he grumbles.

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Once Quackity has taken the marigolds and finally left, George is alone with his thoughts. Quackity isn't *wrong*, technically – most customers were one-offs, and none of his regulars were due today. So if George did, in fact, make a fool of himself trying to befriend one of them, it was unlikely they'd be back to remember it.

He presses his fingers to his temple, feeling the traces of a headache coming on.

"Luna, could you remind me to make some more migraine antidote this evening?"

*"Of course, my moon,"* his familiar replies from where she's basking in the afternoon sun. *"By the way, that azalea bush is extraordinarily irritating. So much attitude!"*

George chuckles, wandering over to scratch gently behind her ear. "Tell me about it. I don't even want to look at it right now."

*"Hm, but you should. A build-up of acid in that pot would have...very disastrous consequences."*

"You think?" George says absent-mindedly, stroking a hand through her black fur.

"Yes," she says with an air of finality.

George raises his hands placatingly. “Okay, okay, I’ll get back to work on it.” He goes over to his workbench. The sun filters in from outside, rays of soft gold washing through the large windowpane in front of him, illuminating dancing motes of dust and the brilliant green leaves of his plants.

George stretches, cracking the joints in his back and neck. “Come here, you,” he says, pulling the azalea over with a tug of magic. It floats jerkily toward him, then settles with a stubborn thunk on the metal bench.

George inhales, letting the magic build up in his fingertips. He closes his eyes, feeling the slight prick of goosebumps along his bare forearms, the tingling sensation that his magic always carried, and begins prodding at the azalea once more. At the Academy, his teachers had always commended his unusually high levels of magic. George had an uncanny ability for being able to manipulate more magic than most of the other witches his age; able to draw on greater reserves than even some teachers.

Of course, that had brought both admiration and scorn in equal measure. When he’d decided to embrace his plant-inclined side, even though he could have likely gone down any path he wished, many of his peers had criticised him for going down such a “soft” path. Surely George should’ve gone into magical theory, or dark art research, or basically anything but owning a flower shop, he’d been told by countless friends.

But George liked where he was. He liked the regularity of his days; waking up with the sunrise, tending to his plants, reading the client orders sent to his inbox overnight, working on new projects, talking to Quackity, feeding Luna, going for lunch at that one cafe across the street. It was perfectly enjoyable, and George hadn’t gotten bored of it just yet.

He feels something in the azalea’s pH levels finally, finally give, and he pushes, surging forward with what was probably far too much magic than necessary. Luna leaps up on to the workbench, a warning purr rumbling in her chest.

*“Watch it, Georgie,”* she says. *“Or you’ll blow this whole place up.”* She’s exaggerating, George knows, but he reins himself in nonetheless. With one final twist of his fingers, the plant is as perfect as can be, and it rattles violently as George withdraws his magic. Finally, it sits there innocently on the workbench, looking as mundane as can be.

George slumps, dropping his shoulders and letting his magic relax. “That was entirely too much work for one little azalea,” he says tiredly.

*“I’ll second that,”* Luna purrs. *“Would you like me to start fetching the ingredients for the migraine brew?”*

George pushes his hair back from his face. “That would be great, Luna, thanks,” he replies, and his familiar prowls slowly to the back room. George takes a moment to breathe, inhaling the intermingling perpetual scents of his shop: mint and citrus and.

It’s almost time to close up, but George doesn’t move, basking in the warmth of the washes of blush and orange from the sun. Quackity always tells him that if George was any animal, he’d be a cat, and honestly, George sees that. He’s not ashamed to admit that he’s been jealous of Luna on more than one occasion.

The copper chimes that hang at the entrance to the shop tinkle brightly, alerting him to a newcomer. George’s work area is tucked just out of sight towards the back of the shop, so he can’t tell who it is. Probably Quackity, forgetting something or the other.

“Uh, hello?” An unfamiliar voice calls. Huh. Nevermind.

George walks towards the shop counter, wiping his hands on the front of his shirt. Standing in front of Nellie is a tall, blonde guy who looks to be around the same age as George. He’s staring in awe at the plants that take up practically every inch of free space in the shop; his attention appears to be captured by a particular cluster of white gardenias.

George clears his throat semi-awkwardly. “Hello,” he says, and the guy’s gaze snaps to his own. George feels like he’s been thrust into the spotlight – the guy has green eyes so vivid they basically mirror the leaves George takes care of each day.

The guy breaks into a warm smile, and George momentarily forgets how to breathe. He sticks out his hand abruptly on reflex.

“I’m George,” he says shortly, willing his heart rate to slow down.

The guy takes his hand uncertainly, and it practically envelopes George’s own entirely. It also reveals that the guy is mortal – George can’t pick up even the tiniest traces of magic in the contact between their skin.

“Dream,” the guys offers. George nods his head. This handshake has probably gone on too long, his brain tells him, and he drops his hand abruptly.

“Can I help you with something?” he blurts.

Dream nods, slowly. “Yeah. Um, I mean, I hope so. I need some flowers. Obviously.”

His nervous demeanour is kind of endearing, George has to admit.

“Sure,” he says. “Do you know what kind you’re looking for?”

Dream shakes his head, worrying his lower lip pensively. “I don’t really know any kind of flowers by name, honestly. I guess it would be stupid to just ask for pretty ones, huh?”

George suppresses a chuckle. “No, that’s not stupid at all. Can I ask what the occasion is?”

A smile tugs at Dream’s lips, and his eyes take on a faraway look. “I’m trying to impress a girl, actually,” he admits sheepishly, and George feels something twang lightly in his chest.

“Of course. I can show you a couple of different options, if you’d like,” he offers. Dream nods eagerly.

“That would be great,” he says warmly. “Also, your shop is really cool, by the way.”

The tips of George’s ears begin to burn. “Um, thank you.” he gets out, turning his back on Dream to fiddle with one of Nellie’s leaves.

“No worries.”

George leads Dream to the shop’s leftmost window, where rich red roses nestle next to vibrant purple orchids, alongside bunches of cheery orange dahlias and pristine white lilies. It’s a gorgeous display, and one George is personally very proud of.

Dream has a thoughtful expression on his face as he scrutinises the flowers closely. He’s standing just in George’s personal space; close enough that George can smell sandalwood cologne, and also notice the freckles that dot across Dream’s nose.

George swallows, shuffles his feet, and remembers what Quackity had asked him to do earlier. Become friends with the next customer that walked in – which in this case, was a highly attractive mortal wanting to buy flowers for his girlfriend. Great.

“Do you know that flowers have different meanings?” George says into the silence.

Dream turns his gaze on George, brow furrowing. “Meanings?”

George nods eagerly, more comfortable talking about his area of expertise. “Yeah. Basically, certain combinations of flowers can send certain messages to someone. There’s a ton of symbolism involved – it’s pretty intricate, honestly.”

Dream cocks his head. “Okay…” he draws out. “So, for instance, if I wanted to send a message that was about love, how would I go about doing that?”

“Love, huh?” George says. “This girl must be pretty special.”

Dream rubs the back of his neck self-consciously. “I mean, I guess?”

George snorts, then immediately clamps a hand over his mouth. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to laugh.”

“No, no, it’s fine,” Dream assures him. “I get it. It’s more of a love confession than anything else, and I figured a nice bouquet would be just the thing to win her heart.”

George nods distractedly, already running through different combinations in his head. Carnations, definitely, and tulips, maybe? George has wooed approximately zero girls in his lifetime, but what he did have was a mastery of the language of flowers.

“Alright,” he says, clapping his hands together. “You can take a seat on that stool next to Nellie, and I’ll start putting your bouquet together.”

Dream stares at him bemusedly. “Who on earth is *Nellie*?”

George smiles, gesturing to his prized elephant ear plant that stands proudly by the shop counter. “She’s right over there,” he says affectionately.

Dream blinks at George, green eyes squinting at him disbelievingly. “I’m sorry, let me get this straight. Nellie is that, that *thing* with the massive leaves you’re pointing at?”

George fixes Dream with an unimpressed glare. “She’s a very special alocasia, and you’ll treat her with the respect she deserves,” he says sharply.

Dream shifts his weight from foot to foot.

“Well, go on,” George says, pushing at Dream’s shoulder lightly. “Sit.”

Dream chuckles softly, but does as he’s told. “You know, when I came across this random flower shop and decided to buy something for a girl I liked, I didn’t expect some short British guy to start giving me orders,” he calls over his shoulder.

George scoffs. “I’m not that short,” he mutters. “And what’s wrong with being British?”

“Aside from the obvious?”

George flips Dream off almost without realising he’s doing so; it just feels oddly natural, like he’s in the middle of a conversation with Quackity instead.



“You wound me, George,” Dream says, clutching his heart dramatically, and George can’t help it – he giggles, surprisingly endeared by this random mortal guy.

“Shut up and let me work on your bouquet,” he shoots back.

“Okay,” Dream says dutifully. Then, “Hey, you have a cat!”

Oh no.

*“Do you need me to put this mortal boy in his place, my moon?”* Luna’s purr echoes in his head, and George starts.

*No*, he tells her, overwhelmingly grateful for the telepathic connection they share. He adored Luna, obviously, but she had rather overprotective tendencies sometimes, and George would prefer it if Dream left his shop without getting mauled by a cat with too much attitude.

“What’s her name?” Dream asks, oblivious to the threat Luna had just thrown his way.

George sighs. *Be nice*, he says sternly to his familiar. *I mean it*.

“Luna,” he says out loud to Dream. “She’s basically my shop assistant.”

Dream laughs at that. “Luna, c’mere, baby,” he coos in a high-pitched voice. “You’re such a pretty kitty, hm?”

*“Surely I can just scratch him once,”* Luna begs.

*Absolutely not*, George scolds her. *Just let him pet you. It’ll keep him distracted while I put together this bouquet.*

*“Fine. But I want fresh salmon for dinner tomorrow,”* she says haughtily.

*Yeah, yeah, sure.*

“Oh! George, I think your cat likes me,” Dream announces proudly. George glances over, and sure enough, Luna has hopped onto Dream’s lap, gazing at him balefully.

“That’s nice,” George replies. “She’s usually not a big fan of strangers.”

*“And I want more of my special cat treats,”* comes the demanding purr in his head. *“The ones you only make on my birthday.”*

*Whatever you want.*

“She’s curling up on my lap! Is she going to fall asleep? If she falls asleep, you know I’m legally obligated to stay still until she wakes up, right,” Dream babbles.

“You’re a big cat person then, huh,” George says. He doesn’t want to get cocky, but this whole “befriend your next customer” thing was going a whole lot better than he could have imagined. Dream seems nice enough, even if he is a mortal, and George could see the two of them being friends.

“Totally. Patches is my baby – I got her from an animal shelter a few years back. Here, you wanna see a pic?”

“I would, but if I don’t start making your bouquet you’re only getting out of here after sunset,”

George says ruefully.

“Oh, you’re right.” Dream says. They lapse into a comfortable silence; George begins selecting the flowers he wants to use. He takes some dark red carnations and strokes their petals, sprucing them up with some magic, then trims their stems neatly with the small gold shears he keeps on his work belt. Next, he takes the roses, pushing his magic into their buds to ensure longevity. The ranunculus blooms come next, and after some careful perusal, George is finally happy with his selection.

He turns around to show Dream, and sees Luna snoring away on his lap, Dream flashing him a radiant smile.

“She *loves* me,” Dream stage whispers, cupping his hands around his mouth. George rolls his eyes to hide the shock of seeing Luna actually warming up to him. Then again, George had warmed up to Dream pretty quickly, too.

“Yeah, yeah,” he smiles. “You can watch me put the bouquet together, if you want,” he offers.

Dream nods his head appreciatively. “That would be cool.”

George walks over to his workbench, gesturing for Dream to follow him. Dream points desperately at the snoring cat in his lap.

“Oh, right,” George says. *Luna*, he thinks loudly. *Wake up*. His familiar opens her eyes blearily, bats Dream on the cheek with her paw, then slinks off in between some of the larger terracotta pots.

“*Have fun explaining that to him*,” she purrs amusedly.

“That was crazy!” Dream exclaims, staring wondrously at George. “It’s like you - like you communicated to her telepathically, or something!”

George shakes his head fondly. “I wish,” he lies. Behind his back, he puts a hasty, wordless glamour over his shears, then holds them up proudly.

“It’s a special cat buzzer my friend got for me,” he says. “Resonates at a tone high enough to get Luna’s attention without harming her ears.”

Dream’s eyes widen. “I need to get one of those. Patches is always getting in trouble the second I take my eyes off of her.”

“Oh, the friend moved country a few months ago and we lost contact,” George says through a bland smile as he shoves the shears deep into his pocket.

“Oh. Um, I’m sorry about that,” Dream says hesitantly.

“It’s fine,” George says. “Anyways, your bouquet?”

“Right, of course.”

George lays the flowers across his workbench. Making bouquets was one of the only things he still did by hand; there was just something so soothing about the process. That’s not to say magic didn’t help, obviously – tying perfect bows manually was a skill George had never bothered to master.

He carefully snips the leaves off the stem of each flower, taking care not to bruise the petals, then lays them neatly in a row. With quick, graceful movements, he places them in a close group,

alternating the colours and species to create a gorgeous arrangement.

Ah. His twine. George would usually just float it over, but that wouldn't work right now.

"Dream, do you mind grabbing my twine? It's just to my side," George says, jerking his head to the left.

"No problem," Dream says brightly. "Sorry, uh." He makes his way around the back of the workbench and reaches around George to grab the spool, his chest pressed alarmingly close to George's back. George swallows, tightening his grasp on the bunch of flowers in his hand.

"Here you go," Dream says, his voice low in the shell of George's ear. George tilts his chin towards the scissors lying in front of him.

"Just snip off about...hm, twelve inches?" George asks.

"How, exactly, would you have done this if I wasn't here?" Dream teases as he follows George's orders, carefully measuring out the twine and cutting it to length. Thankfully, he moves out of George's personal space to do so, wandering around to the far side of the workbench.

George laughs. "Trust me, it's easier when I don't have an audience."

Dream snorts. "Yeah, right."

*You'd be surprised*, George thinks amusedly to himself.

"Anyway," Dream continues, "I dare say I make a pretty decent assistant."

"Oh, *totally*," George says with faux enthusiasm. Carefully, he takes one of his hands away from the bouquet for a millisecond to grab the twine from Dream, then loops it efficiently around the bunched stems, pulling it tight. He ties a knot, securing the flowers together, then examines his handiwork.

Personally, George thinks it looks great. The dark red of the carnation petals contrasts beautifully against the pink roses and the lighter-coloured ranunculus. He reaches under his workbench, extracting a sheet of wax paper from the shelves underneath.

Carefully, he cuts out a large rectangle, then begins wrapping it artfully around the bouquet. Dream hums a tune quietly, leaning forwards with his elbows resting on the table as he watches George work.

*Befriend him*, Quackity's voice echoes in George's head.

"So, um, how'd you meet this girl, then?" George asks.

"Well," Dream says, standing up and stretching languidly. "My best friend introduced me, actually. He's been trying to set me up with someone for ages."

George smiles. "That's nice of him, I guess."

"Nah, he's just convinced I'm going to die alone," Dream drawls. "Even though I was the one who had a girlfriend in eighth grade, while he was part of the anime club, so honestly I'm not sure where his reasoning lies."

George suppresses a laugh. "You guys go back a long time then, huh?" The paper adjusted to his liking, George pulls open a drawer and rummages through the different ribbons. He settles on an

elegant, silky champagne, and trims it to his desired length.

“Oh yeah, Sapnap and I have known each other since we were like, twelve, or something,” Dream informs him, picking up one of the ribbon scraps George had dropped. He rubs it between his fingers. “Woah, this is so soft,” he says reverently.

“Keep it then,” George tells him, half-joking, but Dream’s eyes light up and he slips the ribbon into his pocket.

“Thanks, George,” he says fondly, and George ignores the tug in his stomach at the warmth with which Dream says his name. He’s literally making a bouquet for the guy’s future girlfriend – it’s not the time nor the place for George to develop a stupid crush.

“Well, that’s pretty much it,” he announces abruptly. “Come on, let’s go to the counter so you can pay. I’ve kept you here long enough,” George says, noting the sun has practically finished its descent, the shop painted in hues of blush and orange.

“The bouquet looks beautiful,” Dream says, following George to the register. “I noticed it took you some time to decide on which flowers to add – was there a reason for that?”

George won’t lie – he’s slightly taken aback. He didn’t peg Dream as someone to notice that kind of thing.

“I mean, yeah,” he says slowly, handing the bouquet to Dream. “Look, you see these carnations? They’re light red, which symbolises admiration and adoration – they’re a really common flower used in first date bouquets.”

Dream nods. “That’s interesting. What about the others?”

George points to the roses. “Well, these are kind of obvious. Roses are basically the catch-all representation of romance, so you can’t really go wrong with them. Plus, they smell gorgeous.”

Dream inhales enthusiastically. “I can confirm,” he says proudly, and George shakes his head, reluctantly endeared.

“Finally, the ranunculus –”

“The what?”

“The ranunculus,” George continues firmly, pointing to the swirly pink blooms.

Dream bites his lip, clearing holding back a joke. “The ranunculus,” he repeats solemnly. “What do they mean?”

George becomes aware of the close proximity between them, the way they’re separated only by the bouquet. The way Dream’s face is tilted down towards George, green eyes locked on his own.

“I am dazzled by your charms,” George says softly.

Dream doesn’t say anything for a moment, then raises an eyebrow slowly.

“Well. That’s very sweet of you, George,” he murmurs, and George wants to yank the bouquet out of his hands and stomp it into the ground.

“Shut up,” he says instead. “That’s the meaning. Oh, let me just add one more thing,” George adds quickly, realising he’s forgotten to add in his final touches.

Dream hands him back the bouquet, not breaking eye contact, and George hastens to his selection of what he calls his “filler flowers.”

Carefully, he slides a few bunches of baby’s breath and feverfew amongst the larger blooms, screwing up his nose in concentration. His back is to Dream, so he’s able to cast a quick hand over the bouquet, infusing it with magic and adjusting the flowers incrementally to perfect their positions.

“Okay, it’s actually done now,” he says earnestly, turning back to Dream.

“It looks incredible, George. I seriously can’t thank you enough.”

George waves him off. “No, it’s fine.” He rings up Dream, and Dream slides him a good ten dollars more than necessary.

“A tip,” Dream smiles. “For the educational lesson.”

George stares at him incredulously. “You’re kidding.”

“Not in the slightest. Have a good weekend, George,” Dream calls, already halfway out the door.

“What?” George sputters, but only his plants are there to hear him.

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George doesn’t think about Dream the entire weekend. Okay, that’s a lie. He thinks about Dream for *most* of the weekend, in between filling out more order forms and fixing the planks behind the shop counter that had gone wonky and dealing with Quackity’s incessant phone calls:

*“I can’t believe I have to start college with stupid mortals on Monday while you sit around looking pretty in that jungle you call a shop.”*

*“It’s not my fault you want a job that magic can’t help you with, idiot.”*

*“I hate you. Go eat some dandelions or something.”*

But yeah, George can’t help it. Something about Dream had captured his attention in a way nobody, really, had ever done before. George spends his nights restless, unable to stop thinking about how Dream’s first date had gone.

By the time Monday rolls around, he’s an exhausted wreck, purple smears of eye bags marring his face.

“Gross,” George says to himself, staring at his reflection in the handheld mirror on his office desk.

*“What’s got you so restless, my moon?”* Luna purrs, leaping up on the desk.

“Nothing,” George says grumpily.

*“Is that so?”* His familiar says, and if anyone could make a purr sound skeptical, Luna could.

George stays stubbornly silent.

*“Alright, be that way,”* Luna says imperiously. *“But out of the kindness of my heart, I’ll let you know that “Nothing” is barging its way into your shop in three, two –”*

“George!” Someone yells, and George hears the chimes jangle violently.

“What the fuck,” he hisses at Luna. “Maybe a *little* more warning next time?”

“*How do you know there’s going to be a next time?*”

“Oh, shut up,” George snaps as he jumps up from his chair, walking briskly out into the shop.

“George,” the voice says again, and it’s Dream (of course it is) standing in front of Nellie, arms crossed.

He looks...upset, George notes.

“Good morning, Dream,” he says neutrally.

Dream surges forward, and for one terrifying moment George thinks this mortal is actually trying to kill him until Dream grabs him by the shoulders and wails,

“She thinks we’re better off as *friends*.”

George carefully extracts himself from Dream’s clutches, trying to ignore the way Dream’s hands could probably wrap around the width of George’s entire bicep.

“Sorry, what?”

At this distance, he can see Dream’s dressed far more casually than he was on Friday, in a green hoodie and jeans. His hair is messier, too, and he looks softer around the edges; younger, somehow.

“She said that she appreciated the flowers, and that she enjoyed dinner, but that she doesn’t see us working out together,” Dream says mournfully.

George blinks. “Oh. I mean, I’m sorry.”

Dream huffs, shoving his hands in his hoodie pocket. “It’s whatever. I don’t think it was the bouquet’s fault, if that stops you from feeling guilty.”

“I definitely wasn’t feeling guilty,” George says. “Also, did you just come all the way to my shop to tell me that you got rejected?”

Dream’s mouth forms an ‘o.’ “No,” he protests weakly.

George gives him a slow once-over.

“I actually came to buy some more flowers, if you must know.”

George crosses his arms. “Really.”

There’s a prolonged moment of eye contact, then, “Yes,” Dream says emphatically, slamming his hands down on the counter. “I want one of those,” he continues, pointing to the same white gardenias that George remembers had captured his attention on his last visit.

“Trying to impress another girl this time? Might not work with just a single flower.” George challenges, carefully selecting one of the most pristine blooms.

“Maybe I just want a pop of contrast for my living room,” Dream shoots back.

“Wow, congrats on sounding exactly like every interior designer on those dramatic real estate

shows.”

Dream snorts. “You could use an interior designer. This place is a fucking rainforest.”

“Take that back right now.”

“Or what?”

*“This sounds a lot like flirting,”* Luna interrupts smugly.

George ignores her determinedly, ringing up Dream for the single gardenia. He knows, privately, why Dream had been so taken by them – George had sunk so much magic into the gardenias out of sheer boredom one day that they had practically burst at the petals from it. Even to a mortal, the distinctly beautiful blooms would be hypnotising.

“Well, here you go,” George says, handing the flower to Dream. Their fingertips brush just ever so slightly, and George feels his magic spark at the contact, sending electrifying tingles up his arm.

One of the light charms above them makes a loud popping noise, then breaks into shards that float in a haphazard jumble.

“What the hell? Did that lamp just break out of nowhere?” Dream says incredulously.

“It’s fine. Um, it happens all the time,” George insists.

“You sure? If you can’t reach it, I can check it for you.”

“Stop calling me short! And don’t worry, that won’t be necessary.”

“If you say so. Well, thanks for the gardenia – my living room’s about to get an upgrade.”

After Dream leaves, pausing to pet Nellie’s leaves affectionately on the way out, George realises that he may have a bit of a problem. He thunks his head lightly against the register, absent-mindedly pulling the broken charm towards him. It’s in a state beyond repair. George refuses to think about the metaphorical implications of that.

*“When you come to your senses, do let me know,”* Luna, frustratingly insightful as always, purrs.

*“You know, for a mortal, he’s not all that bad.”*

“He’s really not,” George agrees reluctantly. Above his head, another light charm shatters.

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Dream returns to the shop at least twice a week after that. Every time, he buys another white gardenia, to the point where George had preemptively planted more than Dream could ever buy, coaxing the seedlings to full bloom with delicate tendrils of magic.

And even though Dream swears he’s solely there on the basis of being a customer, their conversations linger; Dream has an endless list of funny anecdotes that typically star the aforementioned best friend “Sapnap” (a childhood nickname that stuck, George has learnt), and George takes every opportunity to teach Dream more about the language of flowers.

*“So, the cool thing about these yellow tulips is that nowadays, they’re representative of cheerfulness and sunshine, but they actually used to mean hopeless love.”*

*“Hopeless love? That’s depressing.”*

*“Well, yeah.”*

*“Fuck, I forgot I had that essay due Friday. George, how much do you know about the themes of existentialism in The Metamorphosis?”*

*“Um, pretty much nothing?”*

*“Yeah, that’s what I figured.”*

It’s an easy enough routine to fall into – it’s almost scary how quickly George gets used to Dream being a part of his life. Luna tells him he’s being foolish – *“Don’t forget what he is, my moon”* – but George stubbornly doesn’t take notice of her.

He’s not afraid to admit that he and Dream are friends now, and he also can’t help but notice that Dream hasn’t brought up any girls since their first meeting. George stifles the bubbles of happiness that rise up in his chest at the thought.

The shop has emptied out, evening curling gently through the window in wisps of lilac. Dream didn’t drop by today; George hates that he feels the absence almost viscerally. He reaches out a hand to the pristine gardenias that are now a permanent feature of the shop’s flower display. He’d almost considered hiding them from the rest of his customers, a stupid voice in his head telling him that those flowers somehow belonged to Dream.

He hadn’t, in the end, placing them instead in the prime display spot next to the cash register. It had served the double benefit of having them close to George, their delicate scent floating prettily through the air.

Dream wasn’t delicate in the slightest; he was loud, and joyful, and bright – if George had to pick a flower to represent him, it would be something bold, something larger than life, like a sunflower.

*“My moon, are you thinking about that mortal boy again? You’ve got that sappy look on your face.”*

George flushes, raising his head to look at Luna with a protest rising on his lips.

*“You’re incredibly transparent. Don’t fault me for noticing.”*

“I just – I don’t think I’ve ever felt this way for someone before, Luna,” George admits, voice trembling slightly.

*“Oh, Georgie,”* Luna purrs, threading her body through his legs. *“If he makes you happy, that’s all that matters. Even if he is a mortal.”*

“Him being mortal is the least of my worries at this point,” George says irritably. “How am I supposed to know if he’s even into guys – let alone me?”

*“You’ll never know if you never ask,”* Luna says wisely.

“Yeah, I don’t think so.”

*“Your choice, my moon. Just know the chance isn’t going to be there forever.”*

Well, that was reassuring.

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“Of course, you could always go for the hydrangeas,” George says to the couple sitting in front of



him. “They’re a personal favourite of mine, and very popular at weddings. Plus, I can enchant them to shift from baby pink to baby blue over the course of the evening, if that’s something you’d like.”

The blonde woman looks ecstatic, turning to her fiancé with pleading eyes. “Babe, that sounds perfect.”

Her fiancé mulls it over, scrutinising the hydrangea cuttings George had conveniently summoned to the desk.

“Alright,” she says, finally. “We’ll take it. Thank you so much.”

George beams. “Thank you,” he says warmly to the two brides-to-be. “I’ll be in touch regarding pricing for the specific enchantments – let me know if there’s anything else you’d like me to do.”

“We will,” the blonde gushes, shaking George’s hand fervently. “Gosh, you just don’t realise how much work goes into a magical wedding. So many details, you know?”

George smiles. “I’m sure.”

*“There’s a very irritating pigeon out there, and he seems to be in need of something,”* Luna informs him, tail swishing in the air as she stalks into the room.

Keeping his smile firmly pasted on, George ushers the couple out, thanking them repeatedly as he does so.

“Yep, thank you, thank you, see you next week,” he says brightly, shutting the door firmly closed behind them.

“Quackity, what do you want?” he asks, hands on his hips as he glares at the bird perched innocently on his window sill.

In a flurry of golden sparkles, Quackity shifts into his human form, grinning from ear to ear.

“You gotta admit that that *never* gets old.”

“I guess it’s pretty cool,” George says begrudgingly.

“Anyways,” Quackity continues brightly, “You’re coming for lunch with me and some of my mortal college friends today.”

George pauses from where he’d been pouring some of his magic into some daffodil bulbs.

“Sorry, say that again?”

“You’re coming to lunch with me, idiot. And you’re going to meet some of my college friends, and you’re going to be nice about it, and you’re going to thank me after for being such a great guy and helping you improve your social circle,” Quackity rattles off.

“Can you stop acting like I don’t have any friends,” George says frustratedly. “I told you, there’s that – that mortal guy who I’ve become pretty close with.”

Quackity’s lips curve up knowingly. “Yes, you have told me about your little boyfriend. Not enough, though.”

George flicks his fingers, casually sending a jolt of electricity Quackity’s way.

“Ow, what the hell, George. It’s true! All you told me was that you met some mortal, that’s it.”

“That’s all you had to know,” George countered. “You told me to befriend my next customer, and I did.”

“Look, if you want to keep him a secret, fine. But at least tell me his name.”

George pretends to consider it for a moment. “No, I don’t think I will,” he says sweetly, a few seconds later.

“And after I invite you to lunch out of the goodness of my heart,” Quackity laments. “Speaking of, come on, let’s go!” He claps his hands abruptly,

George looks down at his rather basic sweater and jeans; it’s his typical work attire. “Do I look okay?”

“You look incredibly handsome,” Quackity assures him. “And I’m sure your boyfriend would agree.”

George sniffs haughtily. “Are you done?”

“Yeah, thanks. Okay, let’s *go*.”

They walk out into the crisp autumn air; it’s chilly, but not uncomfortably so, and the sun is still a glittering presence in the pale sky.

“Where are we going?” George asks. “Also, who are we meeting again?”

“Why do you always ask so many questions?”

“Because I want to know what’s going on?”

“It’s fine, you’ll see when we get there.”

“Have I ever told you how annoying you are?”

“You tell me that constantly.”

George elbows Quackity sharply in his side. “Come on, just tell me a little bit about your friends. I need to know what to say to them.”

“Okay, so we all take the same economics course to fulfill our distributions,” Quackity says, steering George towards another street. “But one of the guys is a computer science major, and the other does English, I think.”

George tries his hardest to follow along, but the mortal educational terms are entirely foreign to him. Back at the Academy, it was so much simpler – you had your individual concentration, plus basic general magical education, and that was it.

“And what – what major are you?” He tries, hoping that he’s using the word correctly.

“Political science, baby,” Quackity says. “Future lawyer, remember?”

“Right, of course.”

Quackity stops abruptly, peering at George with a concerned expression. “Dude, don’t worry,” ,”

he says reassuringly. “You’re going to get along with them fine, I promise.”

George chews on his lower lip. “How do I explain that I never went to college?”

“You took over the family business straight out of high school,” Quackity explains. “Look, just talk about your plants and you’ll blow them away with how much knowledge you have. And if you need an escape, just signal me and I’ll help you out.”

George grins. “Aww, you’re so sweet, Quackity,” he teases.

“Shut up,” Quackity mutters, but his fond smile gives him away. “Hey, we’re here!”

They’ve reached a cafe, and George reads the embossed wood sign that says “The Hideout” in front of them.

“It’s where we usually come for lunch,” Quackity tells him. “The food is surprisingly good. And look, there are the guys.”

George scans the outdoor seating area, and follows Quackity’s gaze to see a friendly-looking guy in a white bandana sitting opposite –

“Dream?” George shakes his head. He’s got to be hallucinating. But no, that green hoodie is unmistakable, and actually seeing Dream outside the dusky light of his shop is something George was not prepared for in the slightest. He feels his pulse begin to quicken.

“You know him?” Quackity says incredulously, and then, “Oh, shit. No, there’s no way. Dream’s your little mortal boyfriend, isn’t he? Dude, what are the fucking chances?”

“Please shut up,” George hisses through his teeth as they walk towards the table. He clenches his fists, feeling his magic churning through his bloodstream unsteadily.

Dream notices them before they get there. “Oh, hey!” he calls. “Wait, George?”

George raises a forcedly casual hand. “Hi.” There’s some awkward shuffling, and somehow George ends up seated at Dream’s right, across from Quackity.

The guy with the bandana looks between George and Dream quizzically. “Hold on,” he says slowly, turning to Dream curiously. “This is George? Like, *the* –”

“Yes, like the florist I was telling you about, thank you, Sapnap,” Dream interrupts loudly. George raises an eyebrow.

“Wow, Dream, you talk about me?”

Quackity’s eyes widen with glee. Dream takes a too-large sip of his water, then coughs.

“Sapnap wanted to know where I kept going during the day,” he explains off-handedly.

“Yeah, because he kept disappearing, like *all* the time,” Sapnap clarifies. “I think he even skipped one of our math classes, once.”

“You make it sound so dramatic,” Dream complains. “It’s not that big of a deal.”

George hums in distracted agreement, privately buzzing with joy. Dream *talked* about him – Dream went out of his way to skip classes for him?

He feels Quackity's gaze burning into him.

"Anyways, what kind of crazy coincidence is it that you guys already knew each other?" Sapnap says, tapping Quackity on the shoulder.

"Yeah, when you told us you were bringing a friend, I didn't even think for a second that it would be George," Dream adds.

"Well, maybe if you ever mentioned to me that you were skiving off algebra to go visit a guy who runs a flower shop, I would have put two and two together."

George laughs, feeling more comfortable by the second.

"To be fair, George told me about you too," Quackity continues, looking at Dream. "He just refused to tell me your name."

George was going to kill him.

Dream throws him a sideways glance, eyes brimming with mirth. "Is that so, George? How the tables have turned, huh."

"I have no idea what Quackity is talking about," George says dryly.

There's a pause, then,

"Quackity?" Sapnap and Dream repeat in bewildered unison.

"Just a nickname from high school," Quackity says hurriedly.

"Oh, *just* a nickname," George teases. "Come on, let me tell them."

"Dude, Quackity is possibly an even weirder nickname than Sapnap," Dream says. "You've got to let him tell us."

Quackity stares at George for a moment, then shrugs. "Fine."

George grins, ready to explain the hilarious passion that Quackity for creating ducks back at the Academy, then clamps his mouth shut. Right. He couldn't tell Dream and Sapnap that story, because they were mortals, and it would quite possibly break their brains.

"Well?" Sapnap prods hesitantly when the silence stretches too long.

George thinks rapidly, putting together a believable story.

"Well, back at the Academy – uh, I mean –"

"No, don't worry, Alex has told us all about your weird posh private school. We don't judge," Dream waves him on casually.

George exhales in relief. Bless Quackity's quick thinking. "Yeah, so the year before we graduated, Quackity – Alex – basically developed this freakish obsession for ducks."

Sapnap snorts. "I'm liking this story already."

"I'm talking *obsession* obsession," George says, gesturing animatedly. "He had posters of them up on his walls, and he kept a bunch of them as pets, so I called his room 'Quack City,' and from

there it just developed into a nickname.”

“Right, thank you for humiliating me before we’ve even ordered, George,” Quackity says, pressing his lips into a thin line.

“No, I love it,” Dream says. “Quackity. It’s catchy!”

“Oh, you bastard.”

“We should order, though,” Sapnap cuts in. “I’m starving.”

“Same,” George says emphatically. “What’s good on the menu here?”

Dream angles his menu towards George, and George leans closer instinctively to look at it.

“Their Green Goddess pasta is really good,” Dream murmurs, pointing at the page. “You’re a plant guy, this has plants in it – it’s fate, really.”

“Shut up,” George huffs, and tries to ignore how strangely intimate it is, the way he’s practically cozied up to Dream.

“Come on, that was kinda funny.”

“Barely,” George deadpans. “But okay, I’ll try the pasta. If I don’t like it, it’s your fault, though.”

“I think that’s a risk I’m willing to take,” Dream says solemnly.

George reluctantly shifts back into his seat, instantly missing the close proximity between him and Dream.

“*Whipped*,” his brain tells him, in a voice that sounds unsurprisingly like Luna’s.

Quackity and Sapnap are somehow engaged in a heated debate over the merits of sweet potato fries, though, so George thinks they probably didn’t notice. He looks at the small flower pot centrepiece on their table. “*Alstroemeria*,” he whispers to himself buoyantly.

“What was that?” Dream asks, and huh, George didn’t know he was listening,

“Friendship and devotion,” he replies simply. Dream’s smile is radiant.

---

A few weeks later, George is sewing together rosemary and sage sachets for a client who wanted them to be infused with good luck charms. It’s rare for him to get requests that require such intricate magic; he’s having to focus intently on the magic, carefully threading it in little by little so that it binds the ingredients together correctly.

He hears the familiar jangle of wind chimes, but doesn’t bother to look up. The sun had set a good few hours ago, and the only person who ever visited this late was Quackity. So it certainly comes as a surprise to hear a greeting in Dream’s voice.

“Hey, George,” he calls, shutting the door behind him with a click. George quickly pauses his work, pushing the sachets away and standing up from his workbench.

“Dream,” he says. His voice is painfully raspy.

“You okay? You sound a little choked-up,” Dream says concernedly as the two of them meet at the

centre of the shop.

George shakes his head dismissively, gesturing to his throat. “Dehydrated,” he croaks. “I was working on an order, and I lost track of time.”

“Oh, that makes sense. You should probably drink some water, then.”

“Thank you for that incredible advice, Dream,” George deadpans. “I’ll make some tea, actually, if you’re interested.”

Dream shudders. “Tea? What are you, my grandma?”

“Don’t diss it till you’ve tried it,” George scolds him, bumping his shoulder gently as he walks to the back rooms. Dream pauses to glance at the now-permanent fixture of white gardenias, sitting unobtrusively to the side.

“Those for me?”

George chuckles. “Yeah, totally.” It comes out more honest than he means it to be.

They walk into the office, and George makes a beeline for his kettle.

“So, why the late-night visit?” He turns his back to Dream, and making sure he’s shielded, places a hand to the kettle, heating the water inside.

“Um,” Dream starts, almost as if he hadn’t expected George to ask.

“Yes?” With the water now at bubbling point, George pours it into his mug and adds his ingredients: dried chamomile and lavender blossoms, basil, honey, and a touch of eleuthero root. He uncorks a half-empty calming draught, stirs in a few drops because he’s earned it.

“What are you making over there, some kind of potion?” Dream sounds genuinely curious, but George isn’t stupid enough to not notice the change of subject.

“Yeah. So, why did you come to see me, Dream?” George takes a sip of his tea, letting the liquid soothe his aching throat.

“Honestly? I couldn’t sleep,” Dream admits.

That isn’t what George expected. Then again, what had he expected?

“Huh.”

“Yeah,” Dream says sheepishly. “I was wondering if you knew any sort of concoction that could help me, maybe?”

“You’re looking at it.” George holds his mug out to Dream. “Careful, it’s hot.”

“George, I think I might need something a little stronger than tea.” Dream refuses to take the mug, staring at George flatly. “I’ve had serious sleeping problems lately.”

George rolls his eyes. “Stop being annoying. I told you, don’t diss it till you’ve tried it. It’ll help, I swear. Quackity loves it.”

“Oh, well if *Quackity* loves it,” Dream teases, but he allows George to push the tea into his hands, and takes a cautious sip. His eyes widen. “George, is this something I can buy, like, long-term? I’ll

admit you might be right for once – this tastes amazing.”

George tugs the sleeves of his sweater past his fingers – his windowpane is thin, and the night air is cold.

“I’m not going to charge you for tea, idiot,” he says. “You’re my friend. I’ll make it for you whenever you need it and drop it off.”

Dream smiles. “I’d really appreciate that.” He drinks some more of the tea, cradling the mug in both his hands. “Fuck, this is *so* good.”

“I know. I made it.”

“Shut up.”

They stay that way, passing the mug back and forth in comfortable silence. George quietly thinks that Dream has never looked more beautiful than right now. The slice of moonlight cutting through the window casts his features in an eerily pale glow – he looks ethereal, otherworldly.

“I’m tired,” Dream yawns, setting down the now empty mug.

“See, it worked! I told you so,” George teases. “Come on, you should get back home.”

George doesn’t actually know where “home” is – all he knows is that Dream has an apartment somewhere in the city.

Dream stretches, rubbing at his face sleepily. “I’m really tired, George,” he says quietly. George frowns. Something seems off.

Dream staggers forwards suddenly, and George has to prop him up, which is exactly as hard as he thought it would be. Dream’s extra few inches of height have never felt so obvious; George carefully slides Dream into his chair and crouches next to him.

It had to be the calming draught. One of the first lessons they’d been taught back at the Academy was that mortals didn’t mix well with potions practically ever. George had somehow forgotten that fact entirely, and gone ahead and dosed his own friend. He was an idiot.

“Wanna sleep, Georgie,” Dream mumbles, dropping his head onto his neck and gazing at George through his eyelashes. George’s heart stutters at the nickname, but he pinches himself harshly. This couldn’t be further from the right time.

“Alright, Dream. You can sleep. Can you just stand up for me – just for a second?” George coaxes him gently, trying to pull Dream up himself and failing miserably.

“Can’t,” Dream says plaintively. “Tired.”

Great, so he’s already reached the stage of monosyllabism. George exhales, wracking his brain desperately for a solution.

*Luna, help*, he thinks wildly.

*“Now why are you waking me up at this hour, my moon?”*

She steps into the office, blinking slowly at him. George gestures helplessly at the mortal slumped in his chair.

“I accidentally gave him some calming draught, but I forgot how much it affected mortals, and now he’s basically drugged out, or something, and I have to get him home but I don’t know where he lives –”

“*Be quiet,*” Luna snaps, cutting off George’s babbling. She leaps up onto the desk, scrutinising Dream closely.

“What do I do, Luna?” George pleads. “How do I help him?”

“*He can’t stay here,*” Luna says decisively. “*He’s already been exposed to too much magic. We need to get him back to his home so his mortal body can return to its normal state.*”

“Okay, but how?” George wrings his hands, berating himself for being so distracted by Dream’s stupid smile and stupid hair and stupid everything. This was where feelings went too far. Dream could be seriously hurt by this, and it was all George’s fault.

“*You’ll have to shift,*” Luna says, finally. “*There’s no other way.*”

George stares at her incredulously. “You’re kidding, right?”

Shifting, or stepping through the dimension of space to get from one location to another, was a hard art to master, and practically impossible for most witches. George had only done it successfully a handful of times himself. And Luna expected him to not only shift to an unknown location, but to do it with Dream in tow?

“*I mean it, George,*” Luna says. “*I’ll help you as much as I can.*”

George scrubs a tired hand across his face. He’s got no other option – as much as he hates to admit it, Luna’s right. The faster he got Dream out of the shop, the better, and shifting was his only method.

“Okay. Okay, yeah. I can do this,” he mutters, mainly to himself.

“*You can,*” Luna purrs encouragingly. “*Place a hand on his shoulder.*”

George does what she says. Dream’s hair curls up in soft golden tufts, brushing against George’s knuckles.

“*Now, close your eyes and imagine something you know Dream has at home. Maybe a T-shirt you’ve seen him wear, or a book he’s mentioned reading. The easier you can picture it, the better.*”

George hates this part of shifting – the visualisation process. It’s why so many witches failed at it; unable to imagine a place they’ve never been to before.

George cracks open his eyes for a second, stealing a look at Dream to jolt his memory. Out of the corner of his eyes, a flash of white – the gardenias. Of course. His heartbeat picks up, and George screws his eyes shut, feeling newly invigorated.

*The gardenias,* he tells Luna. *The white ones. Dream must have bought at least twenty from me in the past few weeks.*

“*Well, at least his money wasn’t going to waste,*” Luna says amusedly. “*Close your eyes again and picture the flowers. You cannot mess this up, my moon.*”

George knows those gardenias like the back of his hand – how often had he gazed at their pristine



blooms? How many times had he wondered what Dream had done with the ones he'd bought; were they in a large, fancy vase, or strewn messily across his kitchen table?

George thinks about what he does know. He had infused the flowers with longer life expectancy, so none of them were wilted. Dream isn't a flashy guy, so it was unlikely they were part of some extravagant display. But Dream also isn't particularly private, either – open with his words, his gestures, his love.

The curve of Dream's jaw rubs against George's skin; he's moved, pressing the side of his cheek into George's palm. George takes a deep breath. For Dream, he can do this.

And suddenly, he sees the gardenias, really sees them, sees how Dream has painstakingly planted them in the small garden on the balcony of his apartment in pots that were far too large and soil that was far too moist. George feels giddy – he's doing it.

*"That's it, my moon. You're almost there."*

George holds the mental image of the gardenias firm in his mind, adding details until so clear it's practically tangible. He can see them, the curve of every ivory petal, the bright green leaves, and he feels something clench in the pit of his gut.

"Now," Luna says urgently, and George steps into the darkness with his fingers clutched tight to Dream's shoulder.

When he opens his eyes, he's standing in a fairly spacious, nicely decorated apartment, and Dream sags to the wooden floor immediately. George lets him be for a moment, too preoccupied with making sure he's in the right place. He stumbles to a photo frame on a shelf, and nearly cries with relief when he sees Dream's familiar face grinning back at him with his arm around Sapnap.

"Mmph, what the hell?" George hears Dream mutter groggily from behind him.

"You're home now," he explains soothingly, helping Dream to his feet. "C'mon, it's bedtime."

Dream gets to his feet heavily, looking dazed. George feels Dream's bleary gaze follow him as he opens the door to what must be Dream's bedroom. He's correct – it's messy, with football posters on the wall and at least three different water bottles on the floor. But it's cozy, and warm, and George belatedly realises that the effects of the calming draught are beginning to hit him, too.

"Dream," George says.

"George."

"Get in the bed."

"Okay."

Dream crawls into the bed, and his snores start up again the second his head hits the pillow. George feels himself able to breathe again, even if it's just incrementally.

He shuts Dream's bedroom door. The world begins to blur around the edges. George sees a large, slightly dilapidated beige couch to his left, and his mind is made up for him.

He sinks into the soft fabric, and finally shuts his eyes.

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George wakes up to a very angry-looking mortal in front of him with his hands on his hips.

“Uh, good morning?” George rubs the sleep out of his eyes.

“What the hell happened last night?” Dream says.

George didn’t think this far ahead. “You were tired, and you came to me for help,” he begins uncertainly.

Dream waves him on. “Yeah, yeah, I know that bit. How about when you somehow fucking teleported me back to my place?”

Shit. George’s stomach drops. He steels himself; this was his moment to come clean.

“Dream, there’s something important I have to tell you. But you’re not going to believe me at first.”

Dream raises an eyebrow. “Okay?”

George sighs. This was it. He conjures a light charm – no glamour – lets it sit atop his palm, a floating orb of pure golden light.

“I’m a witch,” he says simply.

Dream lets out a bark of laughter. His eyes are impossibly wide, and George notices the white of his tightened knuckles. To be fair, he has no idea how he’d react if he was in Dream’s shoes.

“No,” Dream says disbelievingly. “That’s not – witches aren’t –”

“Dream,” George cuts him off sharply. “Look at what I’m doing right now.”

Dream’s gaze flickers wildly between the charm and George. “So all this time,” he says, furrowing his brow, “You never told me?”

George snorts. “How did you expect me to bring something like this up? Oh, sorry, totally slipped my mind the first time we met, but yeah, magic is real, and I have it.”

“We’re *friends*, George,” Dream says, voice rising as he takes a step forward. “I mean – I still don’t know how to process any of this, but I thought I at least knew who you were!”

“You’re not supposed to know who I am,” George shouts back, and he can feel tears pricking hotly at the corners of his eyes. “You were *never* supposed to know! You were just supposed to be another regular fucking customer, until you barged your way into my life and all of a sudden I can’t fucking picture it without *you*!”

The words rip themselves out of George’s chest and into the fragile air; it’s too late to take them back, so George stands his ground, jaw clenched.

“What?” Dream asks, impossibly quiet.

“You heard me.

“That sounded,” Dream says falteringly, “That sounded awfully similar to a love confession, George.”

George feels ice flood his veins. There it is, the painful truth, all laid out in front of him. There’s nothing Dream doesn’t know, now. There’s no reason to stay.

“Maybe it was,” he mutters, vanishing the charm and shoving his hands deep into his pockets.  
“Goodbye, Dream.”

“Wait,” Dream says, grabbing George’s arm. “George. Please.”

“What,” George says flatly. He can only take so much humiliation in one day.

“You – you love me?” There’s a tremble to Dream’s voice, like he can scarcely believe the words coming out of his mouth.

Fuck it. If George goes down, he’s going down swinging.

“Ever since the first day you walked into my shop,” he says.

Dream’s eyes are impassive as he takes another step forward. There’s barely half a foot of space between them now. Slowly, Dream lifts a hand to George’s cheek, brushing away a stray tear.

George’s breath hitches. *This isn’t real*, he thinks deliriously. *He’s dreaming. He has to be.*

But no, no stretch of George’s imagination could ever come close to what it feels like when Dream sets his hands at George’s hips, and tugs him towards him till their noses brush. Dream’s eyes flick back and forth from George’s lips to his eyes for what feels like an eternity. He pauses, exhales, and George feels the thudding of his heart in his throat like a countdown.

“I can’t believe I’m actually saying this. But George – I love you too,” Dream breathes, and carefully slots their lips together.

George’s hands fly up immediately to tangle themselves in Dream’s hair. He kisses him with all the magic he has, like it’s his last day on Earth, like he’s gasping for air. When Dream angles his wrist around the back of George’s neck and draws him even closer, it’s with fiery determination and the promises of something true.

George can feel more tears coursing down his face, and he lets Dream kiss them away. Dream’s mouth is hot, fervently pressed against George’s lips, nose, cheeks, eyelashes. He clutches at Dream’s back a little tighter, trying to say don’t stop without having to speak.

When Dream finally steps back, breathing shakily, George buries his face in his chest, overcome with emotion.

“I don’t even know what to say right now,” he admits, muffled.

“How do you think I feel?” Dream says, half-laughing.

“Oh, right. The whole witch thing.”

“Yeah,” Dream says, voice thick with affection. “You know what? I just found out that you - you *love* me. We can talk about magic later. Right now, George, all I want to do is kiss you.”

George’s heart swells. “Kiss me, then,” he murmurs. And Dream does.

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p.s. kudos and comments are very much appreciated xxxxxx

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